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ABSTRACT

A program based upon the study of human history and culture has been developed for seventh grade students by social studies teachers in Montgomery, Alabama public schools. The major objective of the program is to help students understand how basic relationships between time, space, and the cosmos have operated throughout the history of civilization. Students are directed to analyze schematic illustrations of cultural factors. The first schema represents a prehistoric period in which humans lacked concepts of the past or future. Other schemas represent basic categories of culture--intellectual, social, economic, aesthetic, political, and religious--and interactions among various categories. Students are involved in identifying component parts of each cultural category and considering ways in which the categories are interdependent. Examples of interdependence are changes in economic climate in relation to availability of natural resources; effects of political factors (particularly government influence) on schools and universities; and influences of intellectual attitudes on social and aesthetic trends. Participation in the cultural history program should enable students to recognize cultural patterns, detect continuity throughout human history, and apply the category system of learning to other school subjects and activities. (DB)

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A BASIC APPROACH TO SOCIAL STUDIES:

AN OVERVIEW FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

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It is unfortunate, but true, that many students from elementary school through college find social studies irrelevant, boring, or useless. Many students remember only disoriented facts that may or may not be pertinent to later learning or living. Too often teachers have stressed the trivial, the mundane, or the disconnected at the expense of information that will help students learn to appreciate knowledge and understanding of phenomena such as social relations, politics, cultural differences, and the history of ideas. With this in mind, Oliver Ivey, Professor Emeritus of History at Auburn University and Frances Mantel, a Supervisor in the Montgomery (Alabama) Public Schools directed a three-year study which involved 14 teachers from the Montgomery System and which was financed by an Elementary and Secondary Education Title III grant. The approach they used was a culture by culture study of human history, from tribal man to contemporary society. As a result of the study a cultural history program was developed for the seventh grade that has been used in Montgomery's public schools for seven years now. It is the purpose of this article briefly to outline how this approach works, and to supply some of its major advantages and limitations.

The cultural approach is based on a taxonomy of cultural factors which are herein illustrated in schematic form. We have found the schemas helpful in teaching the student how some basic relationships operate in civilization.

It is important first, that we recognize that not all of what we deal with in everyday life is cultural. There are three basic elements that are physical (or physiological) and these elements existed prior to the existence

of the homo sapien and, in all probability, will exist after his demise. The first of these we call the cosmos. The cosmos is at the furthest reaches of ov imagination and beyond; according to Ritchie Calder, cosmos is the most external expression of order.[1] Inside of the cosmos, we find spatio-temporal relations. Basically, what we mean here is that people live in the universe under various time and space constraints.

First, we will discuss the concept of time. Time is a factor in all living processes since for each human life is a brief period of time which ends in death. Space, for our purposes, includes the geography of the world and those natural features that are part of the world. Thus, space is comprised of physical distance, animals, minerals, vegetables, and even the physical specimen of the human being himself. Spatial factors are those factors which humans may transform but may not be able either to create or to destroy.

At this point, we can look at the first schema. Figure 1 is comprised of three primary factors that control how human beings function; yet humans have little control over these factors. We can consider that fact that we do not really even know what the cosmos is. We have some vague ideas about what time is, but we cannot control time; that is, we cannot stop it nor can we begin it anew.[2] We have control over some elements in space, in the sense that we can transform them. For example, we can kill animals to use them for meat; we can transform iron ore into steel. However, we have little control over the totality of natural resources available.

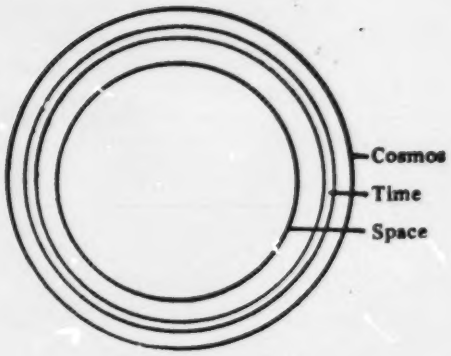

Figure 1.

As we have previously stated the cosmos, time, and space existed before people did. With the development of the human race came the development of culture. However, many years transpired prior to culture. In their early ages humans did not have a concert of the past nor of the future. Humans were living a unidimensional, body-mode of behavior. That is, humans were functioning in the same way as other animals. They were concerned about the propagation of the species, the desire for food, for shelter from the elements and for sex. They were living in a GREAT DARKNESS (Figure 2).[3] Many years later humans developed language as a device for learning. It is at this point that humans became human beings as we know them today.

That is, humans functioned along body-modes of behavior (eat, sleep, etc.),but they alsobegan to function along symbolic-modes (language).[4]

Figure 2.

Thus, the first element of culture was founded--the intellectual. We see, then, that culture is comprised of factors that were created by human beings. Without the first element of culture, the intellectual, there could be no culture, for culture is a system of meanings. Culture is our interpretation of the world around us. Ideas are developed through language or symbols. Thus, we simultaneously developed language, symbols, culture, and the intellectual as well as the intellectual apparatus for developing and controlling the foregoing.

To discuss the basic premises behind the intellectual we must know what items we are concerned with. Philosophy would be included in the intellectual; in addition, we would include science, technology, language, books, colleges, schools, history, and communication. What we will call the leading institution for the intellectual is: the school.[5] The school is the central focus for learning--the place where we find many answers to even more questions--where we learn to learn. (See Figure 3).[6]

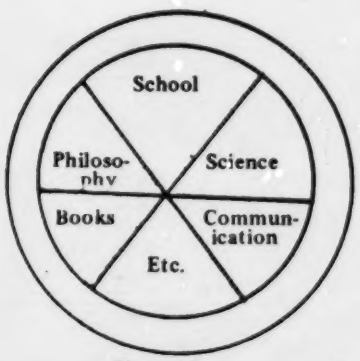

Figure 3.

There are five other factors, or elements of culture: social, economic, aesthetic, political, and religious. We will now briefly discuss each of these elements.

Human beings are born individuals and they die individuals. But much of the activity that people take part in during their lives is with other people. Other people are at the center of social activity. The leading institution of the social element is the family. Other items include: tribes, marriages, the home, festivals, recreation, class, caste, and clan.

The third element in culture, that we will discuss, is the economic element. Economics is concerned with the acquisition, consumption, distribution, and exchange of natural resources. The leading institution in the economics element is the market. Other institutions here would include agriculture, industry, consumption, commerce, ownership, production, contracts, and labor.

The fourth element in any culture is what we will call the political. The political element is concerned with the development of law and order. As the social element grows from one person to two people, to small groups, to complex organizations, to nations, it becomes more and more necessary to establish rules and regulations about how people should act toward one another. The leading institution in the political element is the state. Other aspects of the political include: the military, courts, law, constitutions, the United Nations, executive, judicial, legislative, and government.

The fifth element is the aesthetic. The aesthetic is concerned with man's need to observe, create, and enjoy the beatiful. The leading institution of the aesthetic is the arts. Other important institutions include: theatre, culture, poetry, music, crafts, drama, dance, and architecture.

The sixth element in the study of culture is the religious. Religion is concerned with man's need for ethical and moral standards as well as his search for answers to metaphysical questions. The leading institution is the church. Other institutions include: animism, polytheism, monotheism, temples, the priesthood, missionaries, congregations, ethics, ritual, and sacred writing.

In summary, then, we can see that human beings have developed a culture which is comprised of six basic categories. We have the intellectual with its leading institution--the school; the social, and the leading institution--the family. Thirdly, we can talk about the economic element and the leading institution in the economy--the market. Next is the aesthetic and the leading institution--the arts. Another is the political with the state as its leading institution. Sixth, we have the religious with the church as the leading institution. It is important to remember that all of these categories work together. Now we will bring all of them together to illustrate the basic pattern of what culture is. (See Figure 4).

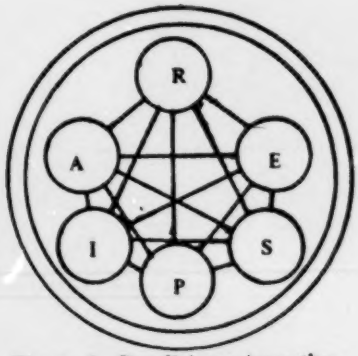

Figure 4. R=religious; A=aesthetic; E=economic; I=intellectual; S=social; and P=political.

These six categories all interact with one another; one can also see that the institutions are themselves interdependent. As we have seen, the six clusters of institutions developed around specific human needs. As we are also aware, these six categories are and have been continuous; they exist in the lives of human beings to a greater or lesser degree simultaneously. We should remember that these relationships interact with time, space (geography), and the cosmos.

The inter-relationship is so elemental that it is often overlooked, although this is coming to be less and less the case in the latter part of the 20th century when it has become apparent that the geosphere contains limited amounts of resources. Whereas, formerly man viewed natural surroundings as something to be conquered and exploited as an enemy would be; presently, the view is that natural surroundings are to be understood and conserved for the mutual benefits to be derived. In the contest between man and space (geography), geography was in the first phase considered to be deterministic and man in the next phase has been considered deterministic. Both views are untenable. If man is to survive, resources must be conserved; there must be mutual adaptation, which means the establishment of a working inter-relationship.

As a matter of fact, such a rough working relationship has existed for most of the time period of civilization. Man was able to survive the rigors of climate and other geographic phenomena which appeared hostile from time to time and place to place, and in the early stages there was not enough man-made damage to be irreversible. It is only in the 20th century that

this irreversible damage potential has appeared. The schema presenting the inter-relationship between spatial phenomena and the clusters of institutions which represent man's activity reflect this view. (See Figure 5.)

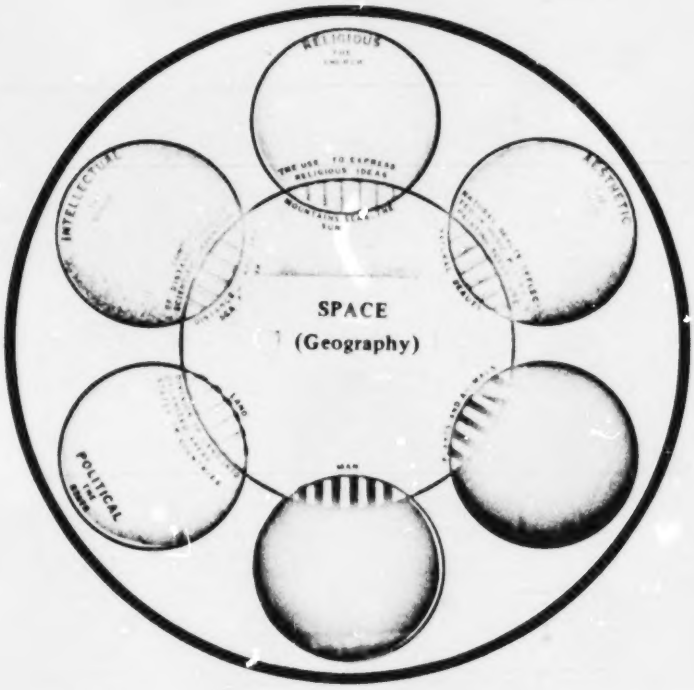

Figure 5.

The dominant position which man has been able to achieve thus far has been due to the intellectual power which has been brought to bear on geographic phenomena. Technology has mastered distance and has produced near mastery over resources. Recent technology, however, has raised the possibility that "mastery" can be self-defeating. A portion of technology which has been wholly benign has been in the field of measurement, and the ability

to present these measurements in the pictures of the earth, drawn to scale, which we call maps. Without these latter the states into which the world has been carved would experience great difficulty in locating themselves. And, of course, these self-same states would not exist at all were it not for the geographic resources which go into the economies. It seems, therefore, that a good case can be made for inevitable inter-relationship between such disparate seeming phenomena as geography and man.

And then there is that other phenomenon completely different from all the others, and yet it is an indispensable part of the process of interaction and/or inter-relationship. We refer to <u>time</u>. Distinctions have been made between natural time, cultural time and artificial (psychological) time. The diagram represents natural time only. (See Figure 6.)

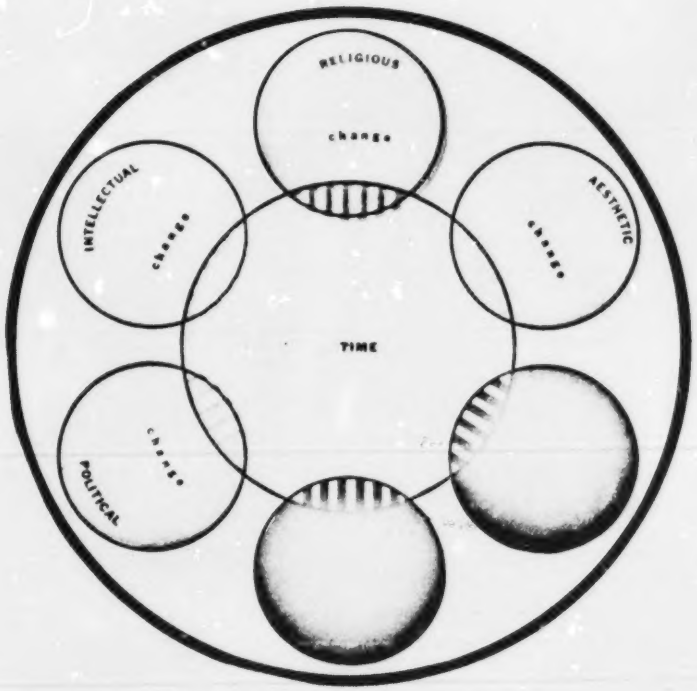

Figure 6.

The major distinction between time and other phenomena in our system, is that while time influences all cultural phenomena through change, natural time is not influenced by cultural categories. In this way, the two non-cultural categories, time and space, are different. Cultural phenomena do influence and change spatial entities, but they do not influence natural time.

The appearance of intervals which we call the passage of time is the important practical phenomenon. And when we come to consider change we discover that rates of change are frequently seen to be more important to a particular problem than change in itself. Anyone who studies the history of anything will be studying the changes which occur.

We are now at the point where we are ready to proceed with the examination of institutional inter-relationships, with a better understanding of two important non-institutional factors which underlie them, namely, space and time.

Let us first look at the intellectual category as the central category to see how it influences and is influenced by the other five cultural categories. (See Figure 7.)

The school is the leading institution of the cultural category: the intellectual. The religious institutions, particularly with the Christian institution, influence the intellectual by suggesting that the words of religious truth are found in the Bible; other groups might suggest that religious truth is rather found in the Koran, the Upanishads, or I Ching. The intellectual also influences the religious by providing such ideals as: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In terms of

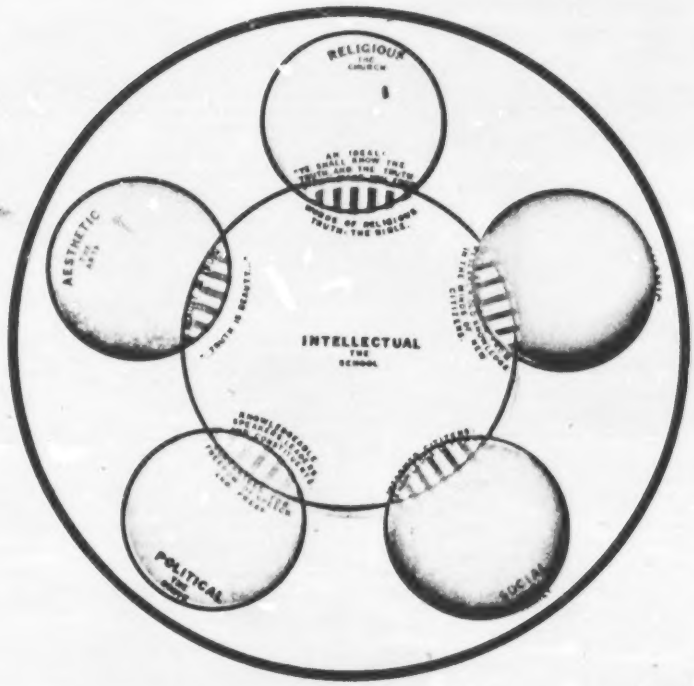

Figure 7.

the relationship between the political and the intellectual, we know for example, that in the United States today the federal government has much influence over universities in that many of the economic resources are provided through governmental grants. In turn, however, the government often calls upon people in academia for assistance with problems of government. Political theory, whether that of Thomas Jefferson or Karl Marx, is a blend of the political and the intellectual. The economic may affect the intellectual in terms of how much money is provided for schools within a given school district, and obviously the intellectual can affect the economic with new ideas on banking, currency, and foreign exchange. The social tends to affect the intellectual in that only people in certain

groups go to college, but within certain groups a high school graduate is expected to go to college. The intellectual affects the social with certain studies undertaken by sociologists, anthropologists, and others wherein through observing and discussing social behavior, customs actually change. The aesthetic is influenced by the intellectual in that we learn our concepts of taste; music and art appreciation courses are geared specifically in this direction. Courses are also taught in terms of how to perform the aesthetic tasks. Aesthetic concepts often provide the impetus for intellectual revelation. This is demonstrated by the fact that Leonardo daVinci drew a picture of something very similar to a helicopter hundreds of years before such a machine was even intellectually feasible.

We could take each of the cultural institutions as the center and demonstrate the inter-relationships. However, instead we will provide a table that illustrates some examples of the mutual influence of the cultural categories, one upon the other. (See Figure 8.)

The next stage, of course, would be to identify three-category interactions, four-category interactions, etc. With this basic approach to the cultural environment that student can learn to accomplish several learning objectives.

1. To recognize patterns. This is a basic learning skill that is tested in a number of nationally-administered, standardized examinations including the American College Test, the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the Law School Admissions Test, and the Graduate Record Examination.

2. To recognize continuity and flow. This is another basic skill that is helpful for the student in other areas of study (such as physics, chemistry,

	AESTHETIC	INTELLECTUAL	SOCIAL	POLITICAL	RELIGIOUS	ECONOMIC
AESTHETIC	The arts	Art theory	Etiquette	Campaign ads	Religious painting	Popular art
INTELLECTUAL	Aesthetic criticism	School	Folklore	Political theory	Ethics	Tool-creating
SOCIAL	Hair styles	Personal names	Family	Penal sanctions	Food tabus	Gift-giving
POLITICAL	Propaganda films	Laws on freedom of expression	Laws on sexual norms	State	State church	Monopoly laws
RELIGIOUS	Church architecture	Creation of "new" religions	Mourning	Blue laws	Church	Taking up collection
ECONOMIC	Musical concerts	Economic theory	Cooperative behavior	Political contributions	Population policy	Market

Figure 8. Two-way institutional interactions.

and mathematics) as well as social studies.

3. To place specifics into categories.

4. To recognize interactions.

5. To recognize diffusion.

All of these basic skills are learned by the student using the cultural approach to social studies. These skills transfer from history to sociology to psychology to economics. By learning the basic six elements of human behavior the student can learn to learn. (S)he begins to apply this category system to everyday activity and learning in the school becomes more meaningful.

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[1]Ritchie Calder, Man and the Cosmos: The Nature of Science Today (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968), p. 55.

[2]George Kubler, The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1962); and Henri Yaker, Humphrey Osmond, and Frances Cheek, editors, The Future of Time: Man's Temporal Environment (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971). And see also: Mark Hickson, III, "A Receiver's View of the Communicative Context: A General Semantics Model," ETC.: A Review of General Semantics, 31 (1974), 377-384. Here the author discusses four different types of "time-binding": phenomenal, physical, psychological, and cultural.

[3]McNeill, William H., The Rise of The West: A History of the Human Community (New York: The New American Library, 1965), p. 19. (Since human history is the story of the development of human institutions, "great darkness" represents the non-existence of these. The outer circle represents the cosmos.

[4]Ernest Becker, The Birth and Death of Meaning, Second edition (New York: The Free Press, 1971). See also: Carl G. Jung, Man and His Symbols (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1974). An explicit definition of man based upon the concept of symbol development has been suggested in: Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

[5]The basis for the designation of a leading institution has to do with its function within the cluster. Each institution in the cluster has its role. Some roles are more important than others. The institution believed to have, over-all, the most important role is designated as the leading institution. Other terms such as (1) basic, (2) central or (3) dominant might best describe such an institution in one or two categories but not in all. For example, the word central might best describe THE SCHOOL in the intellectual and THE MARKET in the economic category; and the word basic might best describe THE FAMILY in the social category and THE ARTS in the aesthetic; and the word dominant might best describe THE STATE in the political category and THE CHURCH in the religious. The phrase leading institution is used to describe outstanding functions in all of the categories. It is presumed to include all those characteristics mentioned above plus others.

[6]In each of the diagrams, the abbreviation, "etc.," is used to illustrate that there are many other institutions in each category.